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Chair: Mr. Saikal ..... (Afghanistan)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Statement by the President of the General Assembly

1. **Ms. Espinosa Garcés** (President of the General Assembly) said that, with its focus on social, humanitarian and cultural issues, the Third Committee could play an important role in making the United Nations more relevant. Five of her seven priorities were within its purview: women, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees, young people and decent employment.

2. The Committee's collective efforts could help to break the vicious cycle of women's inequality, which was of particular importance to her as the fourth woman to preside over the General Assembly. In that connection, she was working actively to convene a summit on women in power in March 2019.

3. The Committee played a critical role in advancing the rights of persons with disabilities and should incorporate a disability perspective in all of its work. Regarding migrants and refugees, the global compact on refugees and the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration would promote their dignity and well-being. The upcoming Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration was thus a significant milestone.

4. Adopted in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had changed lives around the globe. During the current session, the General Assembly would devote a plenary meeting to the celebration of its seventieth anniversary.

5. She called on the delegations to tackle the sensitive and complex issues before them with openness, tolerance, a willingness to compromise and an acute awareness of their responsibility to produce results with a real impact in the lives of people, especially the most vulnerable.

Agenda item 29: Advancement of women (A/73/38, A/73/263, A/73/266, A/73/285, A/73/294 and A/73/301)

6. **Ms. Regnér** (Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)) welcomed the award of the Nobel Peace Prize for 2018 to Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, who had worked hard to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict. The emphasis of the President of the General Assembly on gender equality would give needed impetus to eliminating discrimination and violence against women and girls.

7. The commitments in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action provided a blueprint for action. Almost 25 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women, women and girls were demanding accountability for results. In September, UN-Women had issued a guidance note for comprehensive national reviews. She encouraged all countries to initiate such reviews and to give high priority to any problems revealed, including shrinking space for civil society, which could limit the contribution of the feminist movement and women's and girls' organizations. The reviews should mobilize all stakeholders around new and renewed dialogue. UN-Women stood ready to provide steady and meaningful support, and it was counting on its partners for the required resources. It looked forward to the 2020 high-level meeting of the General Assembly to mark the anniversary of the Conference and accelerate the realization of gender equality.

8. Implementation of the Secretary General's system-wide strategy on gender parity was moving forward. For the first time in United Nations history, full parity had been achieved in the Senior Management Group and among the resident coordinators of United Nations country teams. UN-Women supported those efforts through guidance and system-wide coordination.

9. It was important to address the root causes of violence against women. A comprehensive approach to preventing and eliminating it in all of its forms would enable progress towards many Sustainable Development Goals. Additional attention should be given to marginalized groups and to women and girls facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

10. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls (A/73/294), she said that it focused on sexual harassment, including that facilitated by technology. The emergence of solidary movements around the world revealed the universal, all-pervasive nature of sexual harassment and the inadequacy of existing prevention and redress mechanisms. The report called for laws that recognized sexual harassment as a form of discrimination against women, as well as greater efforts to enact institutional changes that prevented such violence, created safe reporting environments and ensured comprehensive services for victims and survivors.

11. The ongoing work of the International Labour Conference on a new global standard on violence and harassment in the world of work would expand workplace obligations to address violence, including sexual harassment and domestic violence. Within the

United Nations system, a recently formed task force on addressing sexual harassment had established, inter alia, a uniform definition of sexual harassment and a system-wide database to prevent the hiring of individuals whose previous employment had been terminated for sexual harassment. The Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women would also present her report on violence against women in politics (A/73/301), a phenomenon which merited worldwide attention and action.

12. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the trafficking of women and girls (A/73/263), she said that the Sustainable Development Goals targeted many of the contributing factors, such as poverty, lack of decent work opportunities and limited access to education. It was necessary to address not only those factors but also the demand for trafficked women and girls. Technology facilitated such trafficking, but it also offered new possibilities for combating it. The report called for measures to address the weak enforcement of anti-trafficking laws and extremely low conviction rates as well as to promote a more gender-sensitive, survivor-centred response.

13. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation (A/73/266), she said that it pointed to critical gains. However, it also indicated that, at the current rate of progress, they would be cancelled by population growth. Furthermore, the practice was becoming more global, owing to increased population movement. Other challenges included limited enforcement of national legislation, increasing medicalization and limited funding for the implementation of policies and programmes, including monitoring and evaluation. The report called on States to address root causes such as attitudes and belief systems, gender-based discrimination and unequal power relations and to design more targeted responses for groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

14. At its seventy-second session, the General Assembly had adopted significantly more resolutions with a gender perspective, and the Second Committee had issued an invitation to organize a side event on making infrastructure investments work for women and girls at the next session. In 2019, the Commission on the Status of Women would address social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

15. **Ms. Londén** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on intensifying efforts to end obstetric fistula within a generation (A/73/285), said that the condition was both preventable and highly treatable. Its persistence was a sign of global inequality and an indication that health systems were failing to serve the poorest and most vulnerable women and girls. Given the root causes of obstetric fistula, elimination was tied to the achievement of numerous Sustainable Development Goals. Since former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had issued his challenge to end obstetric fistula within a generation, each of the more than 55 fistula-affected countries supported by the Campaign to End Fistula had begun to plan and implement policies and systems for its elimination. The report recommended, inter alia, that those countries invest much more in health systems and secure significantly greater, sustained and predictable financial support for universal access to health care, even in the most remote areas; implement or strengthen national strategies, action plans and budgets for improving access to prevention, treatment and follow-up; include ending fistula in sustainable development plans; establish or strengthen national task forces on its elimination; strengthen awareness and advocacy efforts and increase and improve research, data collection, monitoring and evaluation. They also needed to address underlying factors by ensuring universal access to education, ending violence against women and girls, halting child marriage and preventing teen pregnancy. Lastly, civil society, women's groups and communities, including young people, men, boys and fistula survivors, must be mobilized to advocate for universal access to health care, human rights and the destigmatization of fistula sufferers.

16. The global community would gather later that month at the Global Conference on Primary Health Care to renew their commitment to developing people-centred primary health care. The conference represented a golden opportunity to ensure that the most marginalized, including obstetric fistula survivors, were not left behind.

17. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan) said that Sudanese laws criminalized female genital mutilation and stressed enforcement. Many national efforts to end female genital mutilation had been abandoned, which skewed the statistics in the report and obscured the gains achieved by the Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting.

18. **Ms. Abdelkawy** (Egypt) said that the provision of the Egyptian Penal Code criminalizing female genital mutilation had been amended to make the practice a felony and increase the penalties. The outdated statistics in paragraphs 13 and 14 of the Secretary-General's report undermined the efforts of the Member States and

the Joint Programme, and in paragraph 20, the projected rise in the number of girls undergoing female genital mutilation was also based on old numbers. According to data collected in March 2018 by the Egyptian statistical organization, the current incidence of female genital mutilation in Egypt was 58 per cent, in line with the Government target of 35 per cent by 2020 and full elimination by 2030. As indicated in the report itself, some Egyptian families had publicly declared that they would abandon the practice.

19. **Ms. Leinarte** (Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women), addressing the Third Committee for the last time in her capacity as Chair, said that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was continuing to raise Sustainable Development Goal-related issues during the constructive dialogues and to encourage States parties to report on their efforts to meet the relevant targets. Most of the 28 concluding observations adopted since October 2017 had been linked to the relevant Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

20. The Committee had continued to work with UN-Women, the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to develop methodologies for selected Goal indicators. It had signed a framework of cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and it had made substantive submissions to the high-level political forum on sustainable development regarding the links between international human rights standards and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

21. In view of intimidation and reprisals against women human rights defenders who cooperated with the Committee, it had appointed a rapporteur and alternate rapporteur on intimidation or reprisals. It had also endorsed the Guidelines against Intimidation or Reprisal ("San José Guidelines") (HRI/MC/2015/6). The Committee stood ready to work with the international community and other United Nations entities in that area.

22. In 2018, the Committee had adopted general recommendation No. 37 on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, which provided guidance on measures for achieving gender equality as a factor that would reinforce the resilience of women and communities in the context of climate-induced disasters. It had also begun drafting a general recommendation on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration. The new general recommendation would address gendered dimensions such as the risk factors that exposed women and girls on the move to sexual exploitation and abuse. It would also tackle State parties' responsibility in combating organized crime, including illicit financial flows. The Committee would hold a discussion of the draft general recommendation during its seventy-third session in July 2019, after which it would open the document for comments and conduct regional consultations.

23. The Committee was continuing to implement most of the measures in General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system. The simplified reporting procedure was available to requesting States parties that had previously submitted an initial report considered under the regular procedure and had also submitted an updated common core document no more than five years prior to the request. Twenty-two States parties had made requests, and 12 had met the aforementioned conditions. In addition, the Committee had increased its use of videoconferencing for consultations with United Nations country teams and constructive dialogues with Member States. However, it still lacked adequate human and financial resources to address the increasing numbers of complaints received through the communications procedure or information received under the inquiry procedure.

24. The Committee's partners, including the inter-agency group on reporting to the Committee; International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia-Pacific, and the Geneva Academy for International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, had provided valuable support to its work. The Committee was continuing to engage new partners, such as the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization, the European Commission and the International Organization for Migration, all of which had recently participated in a seminar on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration. Lastly, she thanked the secretariat of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for its support despite scarce resources. She remained hopeful that the 2020 treaty body review process would address the debilitating resource problem.

25. **Ms. Yasunaga** (Japan) said that Japan strongly supported the Committee's latest general recommendation on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change and had been implementing an action plan to promote women's participation in decision-making related to disaster prevention and recovery. It also welcomed the election of a Japanese member. She asked what additional steps the Committee

could take to implement its mandate and what challenges it faced.

26. **Mr. Bourtembourg** (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union commended the quality of the Committee's work under administrative and financial constraints, as well as its interaction with a wide range of human rights actors, including civil society organizations and human rights defenders. It applauded the Committee's efforts to reduce the delay between the submission of reports and their consideration, as well as to make its concluding observations more succinct, country-specific and user friendly, although it urged further improvement in that area. The European Union called on all States that had not yet done so to ratify the Convention and its Optional Protocol and to fulfil their obligations under the Convention, and it encouraged States that had made reservations to consider withdrawing them.

27. Noting the new general recommendations on the right of girls and women to education and on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction, he said that the European Union found both areas critical to ensure that women and girls could enjoy the full range of human rights in all contexts. He would appreciate a status report on the Committee's work on the proposed general recommendations on gender stereotypes and indigenous women and wondered whether it had considered developing a general recommendation on gender equality in the digital age. He would also appreciate hearing her views on priorities for the 2020 treaty body review.

28. **Mr. Holtz** (United Kingdom) said that his country had appointed a special envoy for gender equality in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. At the international level, it was committed to promoting gender equality in its work and to ensuring that girls across the Commonwealth received 12 years of education. It looked forward to a constructive dialogue with the Committee during the consideration of its eighth periodic report. Noting the successful interventions to address the gender dimensions of modern slavery highlighted in the Secretary-General's report on trafficking in women and girls (A/73/263), he said that the United Kingdom had endorsed the Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. He asked how the Committee could drive action to combat modern slavery.

29. **Mr. Kelly** (Ireland) said that the Committee and its reporting process were essential to attaining equality between men and women. As the current Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, Ireland remained committed to achieving gender equality at home and abroad. It welcomed the Committee's decision to establish a working group on cooperation with national human rights institutions, its adoption of general recommendations Nos. 35, 36 and 37 and its decision to prepare new general recommendations on gender stereotypes, indigenous women and trafficking in women in the context of global migration. Regarding the proposed general recommendation on indigenous women, he wondered to what extent it might draw on the agreed conclusions of the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, given the links between rural women and indigenous women.

30. **Mr. Elizondo** (Mexico) said that, in keeping with its policy of openness and cooperation, a Mexican delegation of senior representatives of all levels of government as well as autonomous bodies had met with the Committee in July 2018 for constructive dialogue on its ninth national report. The report had contained input from the three branches of government and civil society, including indigenous women's movements.

31. **Mr. Chernenko** (Russian Federation), referring to General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, asked what steps had been taken to ensure the fair allocation of time between Committee experts and national delegations during the review, to reduce the number of concluding observations and to ensure multilingualism in the work of the Committee. He reiterated his delegation's dissatisfaction with the follow-up methodology, which was not specified in the Convention and made equal and mutually respectful dialogue more difficult. In particular, the assessment category "Information or measures taken are contrary to or reflect rejection of the recommendation", implied guilt. The Committee was not the arbiter of eternal truth.

32. **Ms. Leinarte** (Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) said that, in view of the Committee's limited financial resources, it had decided to work on only one general recommendation at a time. It had chosen to begin with the one on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, but it would not neglect the others. While past general recommendations had taken up to five years, it had been able to adopt general recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence very quickly, and during its last session, it had had time to evaluate the draft concept notes on possible new general recommendations on gender stereotypes and the human rights of indigenous women.

33. Regarding General Assembly resolution 68/268, the Committee was endeavouring to process requests to

use the simplified reporting procedure efficiently and attentively, and it had also developed a very efficient follow-up procedure. Some changes, such as a single national report for all of the treaty bodies, would need to be discussed and decided by the States. The Committee had yet to discuss the new reporting formats in depth.

34. The Committee could address modern slavery by means of a new general recommendation, but it did not yet have even a draft concept note on the subject. Given that women constituted half of trafficking victims in general but almost all of sexual trafficking victims, any general recommendation would focus on modern sexual slavery.

35. The Committee was trying to achieve a more balanced allocation of constructive dialogue time and now had various rules for allocating minutes to the task force. While the task force sometimes received more time than the national delegations, it was important for the delegations to hear the opinions of its members, and most were anxious to do so.

36. **Ms. Šimonović** (Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences), introducing her report on violence against women in politics (A/73/301), said that it took many forms, from misogynistic and sexist verbal attacks to sexual harassment and even femicide. It was intended to discourage women from being politically active, thereby preserving traditional gender roles and stereotypes and maintaining structural and gender-based inequalities. The perpetrators included not only political adversaries but also peers, family members and friends.

37. Violence against women in politics constituted a serious violation of human rights and an obstacle to equal political participation and gender equality. Specific laws and policies were urgently needed. Political parties should adopt zero-tolerance policies on all forms of violence against women in politics and during elections, and national parliaments should establish codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms. Men parliamentarians must be included in the prevention and response efforts.

38. Election observers should receive training, and the reports of election observation missions should include the number or percentage of women who voted and were elected, along with quantitative and qualitative data on election-related violence against women. The missions should share their reports with the relevant treaty bodies and special procedures.

39. Independent United Nations and regional monitoring mechanisms in the area of women's rights and violence against women could play a key role in combating and preventing violence against women in politics by strengthening their monitoring roles in that area. Increased awareness of violence against women in politics was essential for the successful implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on the inclusion of women in peace processes.

40. **Mr. Hendricks** (South Africa) asked what could be done to counter and prevent the intimidation of South African women striving for leadership positions in political and public institutions.

41. **Mr. Bastida Peydro** (Spain) said that his country had been one of the first to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). For the first time, the Spanish Government currently had more women than men. Furthermore, its Congress had approved a state pact to combat violence against women with a five-year budget of 1 billion euros. The National Strategy for the Eradication of Violence against Women (2013–2016) had been successful, and it was preparing a new strategy for 2018–2022. As a member of the Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment, it would continue to work actively to strengthen the internal normative framework and actions of the United Nations.

42. **Mr. Carabalí Baquero** (Colombia) said that his country promoted the participation of women at both the international and national levels. The proportion of seats held by women in the national legislature had increased significantly from 2010 to 2018, and the recently formed Government had an equal number of men and women. With respect to the judiciary, gender equity was taken into consideration when drawing up lists of candidates for the upper courts.

43. **Mr. Jelinski** (Canada) said that his delegation was deeply concerned that more than half of the women parliamentarians in the regions surveyed had experienced sexual harassment. Domestically, Canada had strengthened its legislation for the prevention of sexual harassment and violence in the workplace. Steps should be taken to address international gaps that allowed violence against women and girls in digital contexts and to achieve a better understanding of how digital technologies affected women's participation in politics. He asked how national election observation could be improved to address and prevent violence before, during and after elections.

44. **Ms. Oehri** (Liechtenstein) asked for recommendations on improving the representation of women in high-level political office in Liechtenstein.

45. **Mr. Burri** (Switzerland) said that his delegation welcomed and encouraged the Special Rapporteur's initiative to develop institutional links and thematic cooperation between independent global and regional mechanisms on violence and discrimination against women. The Istanbul Convention had entered into force in Switzerland in April 2018. Regarding sexist stereotypes, he would appreciate examples of media-based preventive measures involving men as defenders of equality.

46. **Ms. Tasuja** (Estonia) asked if the high-level panel on institutional cooperation between independent global and regional mechanisms dealing with violence and discrimination against women held in March 2018 might lead to a practical cooperation project, such as a global campaign to end violence against women in politics. She would also like to know about ways to promote the positive aspects of social media and to bridge the digital gender divide.

47. **Ms. Feldman** (Australia) said that Australia's political parties had committed to achieving 50 per cent female representation by 2025. Its Sex Discrimination Commissioner was leading the world's first national inquiry into sexual harassment in the workplace.

48. **Mr. de Souza Monteiro** (Brazil) said that in 2018 the Superior Electoral Court had ruled that political parties must use 30 per cent of public funding and television and radio campaign time to the support women candidates. His Government would identify the killers of Councillor Marielle Franco and bring them to justice. He asked how actions to eliminate violence against women in politics could support efforts to eliminate violence against women in general.

49. **Mr. Bourtembourg** (Observer for the European Union) said that, under the joint European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls, 50 million euros had been budgeted for a programme to end femicide in Latin America. The United Nations had also specifically agreed to work towards the elimination of violence against women in the context of the European Union Gender Action Plan 2016–2020. With respect to the Special Rapporteur's recommendation that Governments adopt and implement legislation prohibiting violence against women in politics, he asked whether they needed specific laws with different penalties for acts of violence in the political setting and, if so, why.

50. **Ms. Přikrylová** (Czech Republic) said that, at the September session of the Human Rights Council, the Czech delegation had introduced a resolution on equal participation in political and public affairs, requesting the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to disseminate and promote the use of its draft guidelines on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs. The Czech Republic would be focusing on implementing those guidelines, and she urged other States to do the same. She would like to know which of the recommendations for electoral management bodies and election observation missions were most urgent.

51. **Mr. Holtz** (United Kingdom) said that violence against women and girls, including intimate partner violence, was preventable. His country's What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls Programme was pioneering new approaches in Pakistan and Afghanistan that had reduced violence and corporal punishment in schools by as much as half, and its work with faith leaders in conflict-affected communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had helped to reduce reported intimate partner violence dramatically. The United Kingdom intended to make the full results of the What Works programme available later in the year. He would like to know what was being done to support the collection and dissemination of best practices for preventing violence against women and girls. He would also appreciate further information on interinstitutional cooperation.

52. **Ms. Calçada Estrela** (Portugal) asked what steps could be taken to encourage more women to enter politics.

53. **Ms. Dravec** (Slovenia) asked what monitoring measures States should implement to address violence against women in politics.

54. **Mr. Kelly** (Ireland) said that his delegation would appreciate examples of practical, non-legislative measures that had proved effective for creating more encouraging environments for women to participate in political and public life. Ireland condemned the targeting of women human rights defenders and called for prompt investigation to end impunity for those attacks. State funding of political parties in Ireland was dependent on gender balance in the selection of candidates for election in order to promote equal participation of women in politics. However, it was necessary to take a comprehensive approach and think further than representation.

55. **Mr. Chernenko** (Russian Federation) said that the best way to ensure equal opportunities and participation in political life for men and women was to break down barriers and create equal conditions, taking into account national specificities. The concept of gender violence in politics was an exclusive invention of the Special Rapporteur. Violence against women should be addressed comprehensively, not divided into subcategories.

56. **Ms. Edison** (Nigeria) said that, in anticipation of the upcoming elections, the National Democratic Institute had launched a campaign to stop violence against women in politics. She wondered whether the causes and consequences of violence against women in politics were different in developed and developing countries and whether the Special Rapporteur recommended similar actions for countries in both groups.

57. **Ms. Gebrekidan** (Eritrea) asked what innovative steps could be taken to increase societal awareness of violence against women.

58. **Ms. Šimonović** (Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences) said that the United Nations human rights mechanisms needed to join forces with regional mechanisms on topics of common concern in order to be able to carry out their mandates with the resources available. They were finding that they had many shared issues, such as violence against women in politics, that should be addressed through a thematic approach. She herself had wondered about the usefulness of presenting different reports to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. The report on violence against women in politics had been prepared in consultation with UN-Women, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and regional mechanisms dealing with women's rights. Thereafter, she had met with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in October 2018, and she would be meeting again with the aforementioned partners in 2019 to develop a joint agenda. However, cooperation should be expanded to include other treaty monitoring mechanisms such as the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), which monitored the Istanbul Convention, and the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI), which monitored the Convention of Belém do Pará.

59. She did not have sufficient data to back up recommendations for good practices, legislation or preventive measures or identify the similarities and differences between developed and developing countries. Data was being collected by national observation bodies and international monitoring missions, but it was not being shared with the independent global and regional mechanisms. It was necessary to join forces to develop a good method of collecting and sharing data.

60. Regarding the small number of women in political life, the mechanisms dealing with women's rights had hitherto generally advocated temporary special measures to increase their participation, but progress had been slow. It was important to look at obstacles to participation such as violence against women in politics.

61. As to whether or not special laws were needed on violence against women in politics, the answer depended on a State's existing laws. All States should have a general law addressing violence against women in all settings, including politics. However, a separate law might be needed, for example, to give women parliamentarians an efficient mechanism for lodging complaints of sexual harassment or to protect women in the context of political parties.

62. With respect to acts of intimidation, it was important to have support mechanisms in place and to address prevention. Regarding online violence against women, she had covered that subject in a report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/38/47), which contained many recommendations. Ultimately, however, the major social media platforms would have to do their part.

63. With regard to the possibility of a global campaign to end violence against women in politics, action on new topics such as political or online violence would depend on the outcome of the 2020 review. Meetings between the United Nations and regional mechanisms were currently funded by the Republic of Korea, Spain and Switzerland. She hoped that in the future they would have a broader base of support, including funding through the United Nations system.

64. **Ms. Regnér** (Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) said that she looked forward to further collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on the subject of violence against women in politics. It was not only a critical issue but also a current focus of interest throughout the United Nations system. In many countries, the problem was even worse at the local level.

65. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that peace, security and sustainable development could only be achieved through the effective participation of women at all levels of decision-making. The Constitutive Act of the African Union, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the New Partnership for Africa's Development all provided a basis for the pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment, and the recently adopted the African Union Gender Strategy (2018–2027) defined priority actions, investment centres and strategic partnerships.

66. Despite significant progress, African women still faced many challenges, including violence, female genital mutilation, early and forced marriage, exclusion from economic opportunities, underrepresentation in leadership positions, gender inequality in care and domestic work, legal impediments to land ownership and inheritance, and poor health and reproductive services. In that connection, the African Group urged continued support for the Campaign to End Fistula, particularly in high-burden countries.

67. With only two years remaining until the end of the African Women's Decade, the States were stepping up their efforts. The theme for 2019 would be "Women in Decision-making". Already, the newly established African Women Leaders Network had launched the African Women Leadership Fund, formed the Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network and, most recently, helped to organize a high-level side event on leveraging the African Union and United Nations partnership to enhance the role and leadership of women in Africa's transformation. However, sustaining the Network remained a serious challenge, and the African Group urged its partners to maintain their support.

68. **Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of Older Persons, said that the ageing of societies worldwide presented new challenges for women's enjoyment of their human rights. Older women must be empowered to exercise their rights, not only as beneficiaries of special care and social protection but also as active agents and beneficiaries of change. Given the differential impact of ageing on women and men, a gender perspective should be integrated into all policies, programmes and legislation.

69. Gender inequalities and disparities in economic power-sharing, unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work, lack of technological and financial support for women's entrepreneurship, unequal access to labour markets, land and credit, and harmful traditional practices had constrained women's economic empowerment. Recalling that the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing called for the elimination of social and economic inequalities based on age, gender or any other ground, he said that special social protection measures were required to address poverty among older women, who often bore family care responsibilities incompatible with inflexible working conditions, mandatory retirement ages and meagre pensions or social security benefits, leaving them extremely vulnerable.

70. The members of the Group were committed to incorporating the gender dimensions of ageing into their social and economic strategies, policies and actions. A positive view of ageing was an integral aspect of the Madrid Plan of Action. In modern societies, older persons, especially women, were often seen as dependent and a burden on society, reinforcing exclusionary practices at the local and national levels. Achieving gender equality and respect for the human rights for women of all ages would require renewed commitment, improved, rigorously implemented policies and increased funding from all sources, including official development assistance.

71. **Mr. Ten-Pow** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the CARICOM member States had committed at the highest political level to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Thanks to CARICOM regional coordination, technical support, model legislation and research and data collection, they had made great strides, particularly with respect to mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development of national policies and programmes, improving education and training opportunities for women and girls and increasing women's presence in leadership positions and decision-making.

72. Nearly all of the Caribbean countries had legislation and public policy on acts of physical, psychological and sexual violence. They continued to review and strengthen their national legal frameworks and to adopt strategies to address the unequal power relations between women and men, promote the empowerment of women and ensure equal access to opportunities.

73. The CARICOM model Protection against Sexual Harassment Bill had led to the enactment of sexual harassment laws in Barbados and Belize. Guyana, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago had enacted anti-discrimination legislation that penalized sexual harassment in the workplace; Grenada had a law on cybercrime with provisions on child pornography and sexual harassment, and the Bahamas, Grenada and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines addressed sexual harassment in their laws on domestic violence. The countries that did not have sexual harassment or anti-discrimination legislation relied on common law.

74. CARICOM noted with interest the decision by the International Labour Organization to begin work on drafting a new international treaty to protect workers from harassment and violence. Addressing sexual harassment required a comprehensive approach that recognized the continuum of violence against women and girls and the different settings in which it occurred, with comprehensive laws and preventive measures to

shift social norms regarding gender. CARICOM supported the engagement of men and boys in efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual harassment.

75. In January 2017, CARICOM had signed a memorandum of understanding with UN-Women that would allow the collection of Caribbean-wide gender-related data on the implementation of the gender dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals. He expressed appreciation to the United Nations system for its continuing efforts to help the CARICOM countries promote the advancement of women.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.